



Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
One Union Station
Providence, RI 02903
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Press Advisory

What?

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT will present

*Warwick Data in Your Backyard:
Findings from the 2006 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook*

When?

9:30 a.m., Thursday, October 12, 2006

Where?

**Warwick Public Library
600 Sandy Lane
Warwick, RI**

Program

The Data in Your Backyard presentation will highlight key findings from the *2006 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook* and describe trends in the health, economic well-being, safety and education of children in Warwick. Attending the presentation will be elected officials, business leaders, service providers and other interested members of the community.

For more information:

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**Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Presents:
*Warwick Data in Your Backyard***

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**Warwick, RI, October 12, 2006** – Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Policy Analyst, Kat Keenan, presented data from the *2006 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook* to an audience of community leaders. As part of the *Data in Your Backyard Series*, the presentation included indicators of child well-being in Warwick and a community discussion about the data's implications. The presentation took place on **Thursday, October 12<sup>th</sup> from 9:30 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at the Warwick Public Library, 600 Sandy Lane, Warwick, RI.**

**Health**

Warwick continues to do well on indicators of children's health. In 2000-2004, the percentage of women receiving delayed prenatal care in Warwick was 5.7%, lower than the state rate of 9.1%. Early prenatal care is important to identify and treat health problems and influence health behaviors that can compromise fetal development, infant health and maternal health. In addition, the infant mortality rate in Warwick of 5.0 per 1,000 live births was below the state rate of 6.4 per 1,000 live births.

Between 2000-2004, Warwick had a teen birth rate of 8.3 births per every 1,000 girls ages 15-17, which was less than half the state rate of 20.0 births per 1,000 girls ages 15-17. A new indicator in this year's Factbook highlights the number of *infants born at highest risk* – that is, infants born to a mother who is younger than 20, unmarried and without a high school degree. In 2004, there were 23 Warwick infants with these three risk factors which greatly increase the likelihood that a child will live in poverty and are strongly related to healthy cognitive development and school success. Overall, 3% of infants in Warwick were born at highest risk in 2004 compared with the state average of 5%.

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## **Education**

Rhode Island KIDS COUNT also presented data on educational outcomes for Warwick. The data indicate that Warwick is continuing to do well on many of the education indicators. All three of Warwick's high schools are classified as high performing. This classification is based on 21 annual targets for each school. Warwick 4<sup>th</sup> grade and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students exceed the state average on scores of reading proficiency and math skills.

Access to full-day kindergarten in Warwick is limited, with 7% of kindergartners in Warwick attending a full-day program in the 2004-2005 school year, compared to 47% for the state and 82% for the core cities. Research shows that children in full-day kindergarten benefit academically and are more likely to be ready for first grade than children in half-day kindergarten.

## **Economic Well-Being**

In addition to the successes in Warwick, there are some areas for improvement. The data show that 6.7% of all children in Warwick under age 18 live below 100% of the federal poverty threshold (\$19,806 for a family of four). Research shows that families who live just over the poverty threshold also struggle to make ends meet. One in five children in Warwick under age 18 live below 200% of the federal poverty threshold (\$39,612 for a family of four).

In Warwick, only 18% of the 2,444 low-income students eligible for School Breakfast actually participate in the program. This participation rate is lower than the state rate of 31%. Only two out of three children under age 18 who are potentially eligible for Food Stamps are enrolled, very close to the state participation rate of 65%. Low-income children who have access to food programs – such as School Breakfast and Food Stamps – are less likely to experience hunger and are more likely to have better nutrition that is important to their healthy development and educational performance.

Family homelessness continues to be a problem across the state, with 6,408 people seeking emergency shelter services in 2005. Of these, 213 (3%) claimed Warwick as their last city of residence. In 2005, an all time high of 1,717 Rhode Island children received housing in emergency or domestic violence shelters. The escalating housing costs statewide and in Warwick, in combination with housing shortages, is increasing the need for emergency shelter. The average rent for a two bedroom apartment in Warwick increased from \$990 in 2004 to

\$1,148 in 2005 (an increase of 16%). Inadequate, costly or crowded housing has a negative impact on children's health, safety, emotional well-being and education.

Kat Keenan noted, "The city of Warwick has a track record of leadership on children's health and education issues and the trends are encouraging. But there is still work to do. We need to continue our wise investments in the creation and rehabilitation of affordable housing in Warwick and across the state. More can be done to ensure that children have access to the food and nutrition programs that are important to health and educational success. We must continue to work to ensure that child care and health care continue to be available to families and that community leaders ensure access to support services for families who are struggling to make ends meet."

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Rhode Island KIDS COUNT is a statewide children's policy organization that works to improve the economic security, health, safety, education and development of Rhode Island children.